

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: T.N. Kaul, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Government of India  
P.N. Haksar, Secretary to the Prime Minister  
Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President  
Mr. Harold H. Saunders, NSC Staff

Date and Place: 7:45-8:30 a.m. Friday, August 1,  
Rashtrapati Bavan (President's Palace)  
New Delhi, India

At the request of Secretary Kaul, he and Mr. Haksar called on Mr. Kissinger for 45 minutes before the beginning of the Second Advisory Meeting for a private discussion. The following subjects were covered:

Bilateral Relations:

Mr. Haksar opened the conversation by expressing Prime Minister Gandhi's deep concern that Indo-U.S. relations be put on a stable basis. He stated that this had been her goal ever since her first visit to Washington as Prime Minister in 1966. He asked whether Mr. Kissinger felt there were any outstanding differences in the bilateral relationship at this point. Mr. Kissinger replied seriously that he could not think of one. Then he added with a smile, "None now that you are giving us less public advice on how to conduct our policy in Vietnam."

Pakistan:

The Indians then came to what seemed to be the main point on their minds - preparing us for our visit to Pakistan.

They began by reviewing their position that the best way to improve Indian/Pakistani relations is to "outflank" the most difficult issues of Kashmir and the distribution of eastern waters. They felt it might be possible at least to get back to the level of 1965 relations in terms of personnel and commercial exchanges. When Mr. Kissinger asked what our role in this might be, Mr. Kaul suggested that we tell the Pakistanis that the Indian approach is sensible.

When the Indians urged us similarly not to renew military sales to Pakistan, Mr. Kissinger asked them whether India had an interest in driving Pakistan into the hands of Communist China. Mr. Haksar responded that that question was

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sort of like asking someone when he had stopped beating his wife. With all due respect, he felt it was the wrong question. Obviously Pakistan would get its military equipment wherever it had to, but it had no interest in becoming totally dependent on China.

Russia:

Mr. Kissinger asked Mr. Kaul's assessment of Russia. Kaul felt the Russians are obsessed with China. Mr. Kissinger said he saw little U.S. interest in lining up with Russia against China.

Vietnam:

A further discussion of US/Soviet relations led to a discussion of Vietnam. Mr. Kissinger noted that it would be very difficult for Soviet/US relations to improve a great deal until there is progress toward a Vietnam settlement. They would like to end the war but they are not willing to pay the price. The North Vietnamese are trying to wear the U.S. down, and that is something we cannot tolerate. It would be unhealthy for our political system if two Presidents were to founder over this issue.

Mr. Kaul said India's information is that the USSR is trying. Mr. Kissinger realized that they could not do this openly, and we have no interest in their delivering half the Communist parties of the world to Communist China.

The Indians returned then to US/Indian relations. After a period of initial understanding after World War II, the U.S. in 1954 in its alliance with Pakistan, had upset that. Mr. Haksar felt the US had seen the subcontinent through British eyes. The US had seen India and Pakistan as equals -- and treated them in balance.

Mr. Kissinger noted that the strong feeling of many Americans for India had been as much a hindrance to a sound US/Indian policy as a help because American liberals had oversold Indian democracy and people had become disillusioned with it when they saw its reality and such actions as the takeover of Goa.

Mr. Haksar reiterated the need not to equate India and Pakistan. He even intimated that some Americans wanted a weak India and then argued that a strong India would help some of the Southeast Asian nations. He thought Indonesia would welcome this.

Mr. Kissinger assured Mr. Haksar "categorically" that the U.S. had no interest in a weak India -- "Not that (with a smile) a strong India will be any joy to deal with."